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## THE "VALLEY FORGE" FORGERIES.

*William B. Smith*

As far back as the year 1842, there appeared, in the columns of a newspaper then published in Philadelphia by Reuben M. Whitney, called "The Evening Journal," a series of communicated articles under the signature of "Valley Forge." Their avowed object was defamation of the living and the dead. They purported to contain original letters of General Wayne, General Reed, General Samuel Smith, and others. The following correspondence shows the character of these simulated documents. The first communication of "Valley Forge" appeared on the 14th of September, the last on or about the 24th of October, 1842. The Evening Journal ceased to exist some time during the same winter. Its Editor having in vain endeavored to ascertain the anonymous writer who had decoyed him into this scheme of infamy, voluntarily surrendered the manuscripts to the gentlemen whose families had been defamed, and died in May, 1845, at Washington. The originals of the following letters are now in the Historical Society's Library.

### I. THE FORGED LETTERS OF GENERAL SAMUEL SMITH.

#### I. MR. REED TO MR. McLANE.

PHILADELPHIA, September 29, 1842.

DEAR SIR: I hope you will not consider it an intrusion on your valuable time if I ask you to render me a service in a matter affecting, personally, my family and myself. Mr. Sergeant, to whom I have mentioned it, assures me that you will be glad to aid me. Enclosed, you have a very offensive publication which appeared last evening in a newspaper published in this city, called the Evening Journal, and edited by Reuben M. Whitney. It relates mainly to my grandfather, General

Reed, and though, as I believe, a fabrication, so far as respects evidence, and utterly false in its imputations, is told with so much confidence and such an apparent reliance on testimony as to make an impression on, at least, the casual reader. I am unable to ascertain the author. You will see in it a letter from the late General Samuel Smith, of Baltimore, dated 15th February, 1832, the genuineness of which I desire to ascertain. I incline strongly to the belief that it is a fabrication, though it is scarcely conceivable that so audacious an imposture should be attempted. If General Smith's letter be genuine, then I desire to know to whom it was written. It acknowledges the receipt of a letter of the 9th of February, 1832, and refers to conversations with the unknown correspondent fifty years ago (that is in 1782). Gen. Smith's papers will show who this was. I should also like to know if Dr. Craik was a relation of Gen. Smith.

I understand that Gen. Smith's son is living and is known to you. He will not, I am sure, hesitate to give me the information I solicit, more particularly if his father's name has been thus improperly used.

Your early attention to this will much oblige.

Yours very truly and resp'ly,

WILLIAM B. REED.

Do me the favor to return the enclosed.

To the Hon. LOUIS McLANE, Baltimore.

## 2. MR. McLANE TO MR. REED.

BALTIMORE, September 30, 1842.

DEAR SIR: You and Mr. Sergeant have not overrated the willingness with which I will render you any aid in my power, in the matter referred to, in your letter of yesterday. General Smith, however, resides some few miles in the country, and it may not be in my power to communicate with him before the day after to-morrow.

Meantime, I remain, dear sir,

Very respectfully and truly yours,

LOUIS McLANE.

To W. B. REED, Esq., &c. &c.

## 3. MR. J. S. SMITH TO MR. McLANE.

MONTEBELLO, 5th October, 1842.

MY DEAR SIR: I now return the letter of Mr. Reed, with the accompanying extract from a newspaper. I was satisfied on the first perusal of the letter dated Washington, February 15th, 1832, ascribed to my father, the late Gen. S. Smith, that it was not written by him, and further investigation has tended but to strengthen this impression. Not



only is the style not his, but he had no relative named Dr. Craik; nor do I find any trace, among his papers, of the letter said to have been addressed to him, or a copy of that purporting to be in reply.

Very sincerely yours,

JNO. SPEAR SMITH.

Hon. LOUIS McLANE.

#### 4. MR. McLANE TO MR. REED.

PHILADELPHIA, October 8, 1842.

DEAR SIR: I enclose you a letter from Gen. Smith in reply to the last letter you sent me.

I am, very respectfully yours,

LOUIS McLANE.

To W. B. REED, Esq.

#### 5. MR. SMITH TO MR. McLANE.

BALTIMORE, October 8, 1842.

MY DEAR SIR: The letter of 2d October, 1832, sent to you by Mr. Reed, and alleged to be written by my late father, was like that of the preceding February, the production of some other person. It is most certainly not his; of this I entertain not the slightest doubt.

Very truly yours,

JNO. SPEAR SMITH.

Hon. LOUIS McLANE.

#### 6. MR. REED TO MR. SMITH.

PHILADELPHIA, October 7, 1842.

MY DEAR SIR: I this morning received your note forwarded by Mr. McLane, and sincerely thank you for the pleasure its contents gave me. It was calculated to remove from my mind the necessarily painful impression which the infamous libel in question made with reference to your father. I feel that an apology is due, for supposing even for a moment that the letters attributed to Gen. Smith had been written by him, yet it seemed incredible that any one could commit so audacious an imposture, and there was much detail artfully introduced into the letters in order to give them an air of truth. Believe me, all this made but a transient impression, for very slight reflection satisfied me, as I wrote to Mr. McLane that they were of recent fabrication. Still I thought it due to you as well as to myself, to bring the matter directly to your view. I am sincerely glad I did so. It is right, too, that I should say, that I have, since my letter to Mr. McLane, ascertained on the face of these precious documents, misstatements as to facts and dates which could

not have been made by a truth-telling man. If I needed evidence of their being forgeries, this would have satisfied me.

Two of these forged letters have already appeared; what further use is to be made of your father's name, no one can pretend to say. I take for granted that if you and I submit to this, we may expect more, and my object in now writing to you is to confer as to the best mode of arresting and exposing this malignant imposture. I must pursue one of two courses, a prosecution of the printer, or an exposure of the real character of the whole affair to the public. To the former I have a strong professional repugnance, and the latter has its embarrassments which I am sure you will appreciate, so long as I am unable to *prove* the letters attributed to General Smith to be forgeries. If the publisher will, on your demand, exhibit the letters to you, the forgery can be at once detected. If he refuses to do so, there will be an inference of guilt almost as conclusive. But it seems to me that, without your aid, I am necessarily thus embarrassed.

To me and to my family, this is a matter of extreme interest and importance. To you, it seems to me, to be scarcely less so. Will you therefore permit me to suggest the propriety of an immediate demand for a sight of these letters? If you think this course advisable, no time ought to be lost, as the coinage of slander is exceedingly rapid and the circulation by no means inconsiderable.

I hope, my dear sir, you will appreciate the feelings under which I write, and believe me

Very respectfully and truly yours,

WILLIAM B. REED.

To J. S. SMITH, Esq, Baltimore.

P. S. I should at once come to Baltimore and see you on this subject, but my engagements are such as to render absence from home, just now, impracticable.

#### 7. MR. McLANE TO MR. REED.

BALTIMORE, October 11, 1842.

DEAR SIR: I return you the newspaper which you sent me by the last mail. The residence of Gen. Smith in the country, and my own intended departure from the city, prevents me from transmitting the paper to him. I saw him yesterday, and expressed my concurrence in the suggestion that he should ask for a sight of the letters pretended to have been written by the late General Smith. Indeed, I rather think, that should have been his course in the first instance.

Yours very respectfully,

LOUIS McLANE.

To MR REED.

## 8. FROM THE PHILADELPHIA GAZETTE OF OCT. 12, 1842.

"We gladly insert the following communication from our respected fellow-citizens, the Messrs. Reed. We cannot permit it to pass without the expression of the deep disgust which every honest and right-minded man must feel at the use of such means of aspersion as the forgery and fabrication of documents.

## "TO THE PUBLIC.

"There have appeared in the Evening Journal, a newspaper published in this city by Reuben M. Whitney, several articles signed 'Valley Forge,' assailing the public and private character of General Joseph Reed of the Revolution, and wantonly and malignantly designed to wound the feelings of his family. They contained, among others, several letters purporting to have been written by the late General Samuel Smith, of Baltimore, dated, severally, 15th February and 2d October, 1832, and one, without date. On perusing these papers, the undersigned had no doubt that the letters were *forgeries*, and they submit the proof upon this point to the public without further comment, at the present time. The following letter was received this morning.

"WILLIAM B. REED,

"HENRY REED.

"PHILADELPHIA, Monday, October 12, 1842."

## MR. SMITH TO MR. REED.

BALTIMORE, 11 October, 1842.

DEAR SIR: In your letter of the 7th instant, received by me to-day, you suggest the expediency of my going to Philadelphia, to request a sight of the letters, published in the Evening Journal of that city, and most falsely ascribed to my father, the late Gen. S. Smith. Now, if I entertained the slightest doubt of these letters being fabrications, there would be evident propriety in my adopting this course. But, as no such doubt does exist, I will not so far honor them, as to admit, however indirectly, their authenticity. Still, it is due to you, as the representative of your grandfather, that I, standing in the same relation to my father, should authorize you to say, that the letters in question are

audacious forgeries : or, if you prefer it, you are at full liberty to give publicity to this letter.

I am, very respectfully, your ob't serv't,

JNO. SPEAR SMITH.

WILLIAM B. REED, Esq.,  
Philadelphia.

#### 9. MR. SMITH TO MR. REED.

BALTIMORE, 14 October, 1842.

DEAR SIR: I thank you for the Gazette containing my letter, and hope you will continue to send me any other publication on the subject, that may be made.

The next step, I presume, will be the assertion of the Editors that the letters in question are genuine. In that case, you should, as it seems to me, call on them or him, to exhibit the letters to some gentlemen for examination ;—for example, Hon. Louis McLane and Robert Gilmore, Esq., or either of them. Both these gentlemen are intimately acquainted with my father's style and handwriting, and their character is so high, as to induce any one to assent to their arbitrament.

I am, dear sir, very respectfully your ob't serv't,

JNO. SPEAR SMITH.

W. B. REED, Esq.

The matter then will stand thus—my assertion of the forgery, theirs of the authenticity, and the submission to competent judges. But the call for such submission must come from you, as I cannot for a moment admit a doubt.

J. S. S.

#### 10. MR. REED TO MR. SMITH.

PHILADELPHIA, October 14, 1842.

MY DEAR SIR: I enclose to you another "Valley Forge," surpassing, if possible, in audacity, its predecessors. The boldness of this imposture, I confess amazes me, and what its design and source is wholly beyond my comprehension. Since my last letter to you we have seen Mr. Isaac Wayne, the son of Gen. Wayne, who immediately pronounced the letters attributed to his father to be fabrications. Yet these Wayne letters, this writer says, he received, in copy, from your father. Bearing all this in mind, as well as the absurd story of Dr. Craik being a relative of yours, is not the insolence of the enclosed amazing? On Monday we shall, I presume, have a new budget of threats, and lies, and forgeries. I shall admit no *test* till the author is given up.

I have seen and conferred with Mr. Ingersoll, who seems to doubt the efficacy of any legal measures on your part. I do not agree with him,

though I entirely appreciate his doubts as to the expediency of such steps. I think it is a libel to append the signature either of the dead or the living to a libellous letter. Still there are considerations of expediency which are to be well weighed. My own course is yet undetermined. It will, however, be a decided one. This affair has created much unpleasant feeling, and continues to excite attention.

Truly yours,

WILLIAM B. REED.

P. S. The above should have been mailed last night, but was accidentally delayed. I have, since, received your favor of the 14th. You will I think agree with me that it is best now to pause till Monday. In a matter about which, having so much feeling, I somewhat distrust my judgment, I have placed the whole affair under the counsel of my friend and relative, Mr. Sergeant.

Let me hear from you from time to time.

#### 11. MR. SMITH TO MR. REED.

BALTIMORE, 18 October, 1842.

DEAR SIR: I most cheerfully accede to the proposition of "Valley Forge," of submitting to three gentlemen the letters, which he ascribes to my father, and for this purpose will meet you and your brother at the Washington House, in your city, on Monday next, at five P. M.

Respectfully, your ob't serv't,

JNO. SPEAR SMITH.

WILLIAM B. REED, Esq.

#### 12. MR. SMITH TO MR. REED.

BALTIMORE, 22 October, 1842.

DEAR SIR: We have just discovered that the cars do not leave this on the mornings of Sunday, and owing to the infirmities of Messrs. Gilmor and Purviance, they can travel only during the day. They will therefore not be able to start until Monday morning, which will necessarily postpone the meeting until Monday evening at six. I will probably go to-night with Mr. McLane, and you may see one or the other of us to-morrow morning. I write lest anything should occur to prevent my leaving here.

Respectfully your ob't serv't,

JNO. SPEAR SMITH.

W. B. REED, Esq.

P. S.

## 13. MR. SMITH TO MR. REED.

BALTIMORE, 23 October, 1842.

DEAR SIR : It was not in my power to accompany Mr. McLane yesterday evening, but we will all leave this in the morning, so as to be ready for the meeting in the evening.

Respectfully your ob't serv't,

JNO. SPEAR SMITH.

W. B. REED, Esq.,  
Phila.

## 14. FROM THE PHILADELPHIA GAZETTE OF OCT. 25, 1842.

"Here is the sequel of the offer of an issue upon the forgery of certain letters published in the Evening Journal, accepted by the parties to whom offered. Forged or not forged, that was the question. The party charged 'fled for it.' Flight is conviction: so the issue is decided. Every one can understand the matter; it is too plain for comment."

## A CARD.

The following proposition was published in the Evening Journal of the 17th instant:—

"The proposition which in my communication I promised to announce on to-day, is here submitted; that Messrs. Wm. B. and Henry Reed, and John Spear Smith, accompanied by any three friends whom they may please to select, shall meet me in company with an equal number of friends, at any hour of any day which they may name after Friday next, at any place in the City of Philadelphia (the residence of either of the Messrs. Reed, the office or residence of the Editor of the Evening Journal, or my own residence excepted), that I will then and there produce the *original* letters of General Smith to Col. —, the copy, made by a near relative of Mr. John Spear Smith, of the correspondence between General Reed and General Wayne, and the original certificates of character given by General Washington and Colonel Smith to Sergeant Andrew Kemp. After the documents shall have been read, examined, and made to undergo any and all species of comparison which the Messrs. Reed and Mr. Smith shall suggest, a report upon their authenticity shall be drawn up and signed by the three friends of each party, and published in the Evening Journal.

"Here is a proposition which will bring this matter to an infallible and almost immediate test. I offer to the Messrs. Reed every advantage—their own selection of time and place. I await their reply through the columns of any paper in the City of Philadelphia. If not given by Friday next, I shall consider their silence as a dishonorable refusal to meet me face to face, and I shall proceed to publish, without delay, the remaining manuscripts of which I am possessed. If they signify an acceptance of my proposition, I shall defer the publication of any other matter until after the report of our 'Joint Committee' shall appear.

"I pause for a reply.

VALLEY FORGE.

"Oct. 17, 1842."

This was accepted by the following note, published on Thursday, 20th, and republished in the Evening Journal of Friday, 21st.

"The undersigned have no hesitation in acceding to the proposition contained in the communication, signed 'Valley Forge,' in the *Evening Journal*, of the 17th instant, and will be in parlor No. 3 at the Washington House, Chestnut above Seventh Street, in the City of Philadelphia, on Monday, the 24th instant, at 6 o'clock P. M., accompanied by three friends.

"JNO. SPEAR SMITH.

"BALTIMORE, October 18.

"WILLIAM B. REED,

"HENRY REED.

"PHILADELPHIA, October 19th, 1842."

In compliance with this arrangement, I came to this city this evening, accompanied by three of my friends, conversant with my father's handwriting, viz.: Hon. Louis McLane, Robert Gilmer, and Robert Purviance, Esqs., and was met, at the place and hour of appointment, by William B. Reed and Henry Reed, Esqs., and waited there until half-past eight o'clock, without the appearance of the author of "Valley Forge," or any of his friends.

JNO. SPEAR SMITH.

WASHINGTON HOUSE, PARLOR No. 3,

Monday, October 24th, 1842.

# 15. MR. HARTWELL'S STATEMENT—THE PROPRIETOR OF THE WASHINGTON HOUSE.

About 6 o'clock, Mr. Howe, who is the Reporter for the *Evening Journal*, called at the bar of the Washington House,—he was in company with Mr. —;\* they came together to the bar and inquired, "Who was here?" I replied, Mr. Reed and several other gentlemen. I gave no further particulars at that time. He went in to supper. Mr. — went away. On Mr. Howe's returning from the tea-table, he came again to the bar, and inquired, What gentlemen were in Parlor No. 3? I sent Mr. Mackenzie, my bookkeeper, up to No. 3 to inquire. Mr. Mackenzie returned and informed him that the two Mr. Reeds, General John Spear Smith, and two other gentlemen were there. He then remained for some few minutes, and desired me to show him to No. 3. I called Mr. Bartlett, the barkeeper, and directed him to show Mr. Howe to No. 3. They went into the entry. Mr. Bartlett asked him if he wished to go to No. 3. He inquired who was there. Mr. Bartlett replied, Mr. Reed, General Smith, and two or three other gentlemen. He then replied he would not go then—he would wait a spell. He then turned away and went out.

H. J. HARTWELL.

So far as the above is within my knowledge it is correct.

HORACE BARTLETT.

PHILADELPHIA, Oct. 24, 1842.

# 16. MR. SMITH TO MR. REED.

BALTIMORE, 27 October, 1842.

DEAR SIR: I thank you for the *Evening Journal* containing the limping retreat of your adversary, and hope you will continue to send me any other that may touch on the same subject. I would thank you also for the first forged letter, signed "Samuel Smith," as I wish to file away the whole, for future reference, in case of a revival of this outrage. You will remember that you withdrew that letter.

The conviction of the forgery seems to give universal satisfaction here.

Very respectfully your obedient servant,

JNO. SPEAR SMITH.

W. B. REED, Esq.,

Philadelphia.

\* This name is withheld, being that of a gentleman whose motive for interference was probably mere curiosity.



## 17. MR. SMITH TO MR. REED.

BALTIMORE, 2 Nov. 1842.

DEAR SIR: Your "friend" Whitney took me by surprise, to-day, by coming into my room about half-past nine. He introduced himself, and apologized for giving me so much trouble, but that the object of his visit was to inquire whether I had examined my father's papers. I replied that he must allow me a small share either of discretion or common sense, to suppose that in so important a matter I would neglect any investigation to authorize the public declaration I had given of the forgery of the letters ascribed to my father—that I had examined his papers, assisted by a friend, and no trace whatever could be found of the subject, that I had done all that a gentleman could do to prove my assertion—that it was my affair and not yours, as he might have seen from my card—that my father's papers were put away with great care, and that every member of his family pronounced the letters, as I had done, to be forgeries.

This is as near the substance of the conversation as can be, without giving you an exact copy which I made of it, within thirty minutes after he left me.

Had I seen his Journal of the 31st previously, I would have made no reply to him whatever, other than that I was done with the affair.

Respectfully, your obedient servant,

J. SPEAR SMITH.

W. B. REED, Esq.

## 18. THE FORGED LETTERS OF GENERAL WAYNE AND GENERAL REED.

These letters were published in the Evening Journal of Oct. 8, 1842, and were respectively dated December 26th, 27th, and 28th, 1783. At the very time they purported to be written General Reed was on his voyage to Europe, having sailed in company with Doctor Witherspoon on the twentieth of December, 1783, in the Ship Washington, Captain Richard Dale.

## 1. THE REV. SAMUEL MILLER TO MR. REED.

PRINCETON, Oct. 6th. 1842.

MY DEAR SIR: Your letter, postmarked the 5th though dated the 11th, reached me last night. This morning I have examined all the College records I could find; but have ascertained the following facts only:—

Dr. Witherspoon and General Reed were commissioned to go to

Europe, Oct. 22d, 1783: they went, and the former was present at the meeting of the Board in Sept. 1784. I find an order for 30 guineas, in favor of Capt. Dale, to pay Dr. W.'s passage in the Ship Washington, with Richard Dale's receipt subscribed, dated Dec. 13th, 1783. Also, two receipts for money received on account of Dr. W., dated one the 24th the other the 27th of Dec., which show pretty clearly that he was then absent. Of course, if Dale (was he not Mrs. George C. Read's father?) was the captain, he was here Dec. 13th, and the ship must have set sail on the latter day, or between that and the 24th. It seems most likely the passage-money was paid on, or just before the day of sailing.

The Stated Clerk of the Board of Trustees is absent from town, which prevents my access to sundry boxes in the library, which may contain additional papers. These I will examine at the earliest possible moment. The minutes of the Board mention a report from Dr. W. of the mission of General Reed and himself, which I cannot find, yet can hardly be lost. This, I should think, must have stated the facts you desire.

When I shall be able to continue the search proposed depends on the return of the Stated Clerk. You may rely on my attention to the matter.

Be good enough to present my respects to Mrs. Reed.

I am very truly yours,

SAMUEL MILLER, JR.

W. B. REED, Esquire.

## 2. MR. ISAAC WAYNE TO MR. HENRY REED.

CHESTER COUNTY, 11th October, 1842.

DEAR SIR: I have perused with infinite pain, in the Evening Journal of the 6th instant, the correspondence to which you yesterday directed my attention, purporting to have occurred in December, 1783, between your grandfather, General Reed, and my father, General Wayne.

I cannot for a moment entertain a belief that General Wayne, on any occasion, expressed sentiments so disparaging to the patriotism and military fame of General Reed, as appear in the aforesaid correspondence. Among General Wayne's papers, in my possession, I have never discovered anything of the kind. Add to this, that, a short time previously to his death, I heard the General speak respectfully of the memory of General Reed; hence it was that, in a memoir of General Wayne, published in Atkinson's Casket of 1829-30, I endeavored to do justice to the memory of General Reed.

Very respectfully,

Your friend,

I. WAYNE.

HENRY REED, Esq.

P. S.—It is proper to add that, in regard to the matter of \$3000, said to have been owing from General Reed to General Wayne, and paid by the former to the latter, after his return from Europe in 1784, of such a transaction between the above parties I have never seen any memorandum or notice of the kind. If there had have been any occurrence of the kind, some evidence of the fact would have certainly appeared amongst General Wayne's papers or records. I have never discovered any such memorandum or notice. I therefore conclude that this matter of \$3000, like the other correspondence, is a fabrication.

### 3. MR. A. R. PERKINS TO MR. HENRY REED.

PHILADELPHIA, 16 Nov. 1842.

DEAR SIR: In compliance with your request that I would commit to paper the substance of what took place on a recent visit made by me to Col. Isaac Wayne, I beg leave to state that, on the occasion referred, he informed me that you had applied to him, a few days previously, for the purpose of having access to the papers of his father, General Anthony Wayne. Inferring from what I had seen in the public papers a few days before, that your object was to get information relative to a correspondence said to have taken place between General Wayne and General Reed, and feeling curiosity myself on the subject, I asked him (after referring to the fact of such a correspondence having been published) what he thought of it? He replied, that he could not believe it to be genuine; and then added, that having, some years previously, gone over his father's papers, for the purpose of furnishing some for publication, he had become acquainted, generally, with the character of his correspondence with individuals; that in his letters to General Reed he had never seen the expression of any other than kind feelings; that he (Col. Wayne) had always represented the existence of such feelings, and (I believe I now use his own words) "nothing has occurred for many years to give me so much pain as now, to find it questioned."

Upon ascertaining that the papers were still in his possession, I offered to assist him in going over them again, that he might be entirely satisfied on the subject. He accepted my offer. We examined, with considerable care, the correspondence, particularly that of 1783, but found nothing bearing the slightest resemblance in character to that published, as from a copy purporting to have been made by the late General Smith, of Maryland.

In conclusion, sir, I have only to add that it will give me pleasure at

all times to represent it, as the opinion of Colonel Wayne, that the publication referred to is a forgery.

I am, with great respect,

Your ob't servant,

ABR. R. PERKINS.

TO PROF. HENRY REED.

### III. THE KEMP FORGERIES.

#### 1. MR. REED TO GENERAL JOHN ARMSTRONG.\*

PHILADELPHIA, Sept. 29, 1842.

DEAR SIR: I hope that our former brief personal acquaintance has not escaped your recollection. Circumstances have occurred recently which make it necessary for me again to trouble you for testimony in relation to the past, and, strange as it may seem, personal or political hostility to me has revived slanders against my family, which it becomes me to repel. I enclose for your perusal one of a series of libellous publications which have lately appeared in one of our newspapers. The author I have been unable to ascertain. I consider most of it, so far as respects evidence, to be fabricated for the occasion, and all of it I believe to be false. Still, it is circumstantially narrated, and ought not to pass unnoticed.

It is the intention of my brother, Mr. Henry Reed, and myself to have the pleasure of seeing you on this subject early on Saturday morning, and hope you will not consider us intruders. Should anything occur to prevent us from coming, I will write again and explain myself more fully. I send the paper for your careful consideration, and without further comment, I feel that I am authorized to appeal to you as a friend of my grandfather, and of,

Yours very respectfully,

W. B. REED.

TO GENERAL JOHN ARMSTRONG,

Lower Red Hook, Dutchess County.

#### 2. GENERAL ARMSTRONG TO MR. REED.

RED HOOK, 3d of October, 1842.

DEAR SIR: I send enclosed two scrawls hastily written on the subject of your late visit to this place. One of the two, a declaration or certificate, that though with the army in '78 I never heard of any such

\* The following letters, it will be observed, were written before the actual exposure of the "forgery."

conduct on the part of General Reed, nor saw any symptom of suspicion or ill will in any part of the army towards him, which I think ought to balance all the camp news sent by the Sergeant to his mother. The other you will find to be extracts from Washington's letters, which are conclusive.

I begin my journey Southward to-morrow; if I find the exercise useful I will continue it to Philadelphia, and not improbably to Baltimore. In the mean time and always believe me your friend and servant.

JOHN ARMSTRONG.

### 3. STATEMENT ENCLOSED.

Finding, in a late number of the Philadelphia Evening Journal, a statement affecting the conduct and character of a distinguished officer of the army of the Revolution, General Joseph Reed, asserting that the said Reed had matured a project for betraying the American army to the enemy, which was only prevented by information given to Washington, who ordered the said Reed to be arrested, and should he make any attempt at resistance to be shot.

Of the facts thus stated the undersigned, who was then and continued to be an officer of the army during the period referred to, and in daily intercourse with officers of all grades, solemnly declares, that he never, through any channel, heard a whisper of facts so likely to be generally known, and which, according to the aforesaid statement were known to the whole army, in whom it is said to have produced a decided hatred of General Reed. Of this general hatred, our evidence will be positive that none such existed; but, on the contrary, that General Reed was among the most popular men of the army, and more than any other man in the confidence of Washington.

JOHN ARMSTRONG.

### 1. MR. REED TO PRESIDENT SPARKS.

PHILADEL. Oct. 5, 1842.

DEAR SIR: I am compelled, though anxious to avoid troubling you, to call your attention to a matter that has occurred here. Look at the enclosed newspapers (the articles signed "Valley Forge"), and give me your candid opinion about them. Who the author is, I am unable even to conjecture, though, in a proper season, measures will be taken to detect him. The motive of the assault on me is personal or political hostility carried to a high point of malignity. The circumstantial details given

and the show of what is called evidence, however absurd on its face, are calculated to make an impression. My own belief is that there never was such a person as *Kemp*, and that the letters from General Smith are forgeries. What do *you* think? Though I prefer your unaided judgment on this matter, I will point your attention to one or two matters that occur to me.

1. The story of the cipher letter and arrest at Valley Forge. The Commissioners arrived on 4th June; Washington knew of their arrival on 9th, and left his camp on 18th. In these nine days, all must have happened. Is there any evidence known to you on this point? We have Washington's very affectionate letters as late as 1780.

2. There is no such correspondence known to us as that with Wayne in 1781, which is promised.

I might go on and refer to various other points, but on reflection will refer the matter generally to you for consideration. Do me the favor to let me hear your views freely, and as soon as convenient. I shall make no use of them without your permission.

It is probable I shall next week go to Washington, to examine the correspondence, &c., in the Department of State. I shall be glad to hear from you before I go. I have written to Baltimore, to have an examination made of General Smith's papers. The audacity of such an imposture is scarcely credible.

Do not think that I am attaching too much import to this libel. It has given great pain, and must be noticed.

In haste, truly yours,

WILLIAM B. REED.

P.S. I wrote the above some days ago, and have kept it by me till I should hear from Baltimore, whither I had written to ascertain if the "Smith" letters were genuine. I have to-day received a note from Jno. Spear Smith, Esq., expressing his belief that the letters are fabrications, as he is unable to find any trace of such a correspondence. Dr. Craik, he says, was no relation to his father.

## 5. PRESIDENT SPARKS TO MR. REED. .

CAMBRIDGE, Oct. 10, 1842.

DEAR SIR: I have received your letter of the 5th instant. The papers, which were enclosed, I have read with great surprise. You ask my opinion of their contents.

The letters, signed by Kemp, do not appear to me to possess the least value as historical testimony. His rank in the army did not place him

in a situation to obtain any accurate knowledge of the events and designs to which he alludes. As to the transactions at Valley Forge, his statements are so erroneous on the face of them, as utterly to destroy their credibility. His letter, dated the 13th of June, says, "*This spring*, it seems, King George sent over some Commissioners, as they call them, to endeavor to make a peace with us, and it turns out that General Reed has been in secret correspondence with them *all the time*, and was offered large amounts to play into their hands." Now the fact is, that the Commissioners had arrived in the country only nine days before the date of this letter, which period certainly did not allow an opportunity for such a correspondence as is pretended. It is true that Governor Johnstone, one of the Commissioners, wrote to General Reed soon after his arrival, as he did also to General Washington and to some other persons. And it is likewise true, that General Reed showed the letter to General Washington, and enclosed him a draft of the answer, upon which he asked his advice. General Washington's reply, dated two days *after* Kemp's letter, is written in a tone of friendship and confidence. He approved the answer, but suggested a "small alteration," and desired an interview on the subject with General Reed before the letter should be sent to Governor Johnstone. The story of the arrest seems as gratuitous as that of the "secret correspondence," and is not confirmed by any evidence which I have seen.

If General Reed was at the battle of Monmouth, he must have been there as a volunteer, for he was then a Member of Congress, and had no command in the army; nor is his name among those of the officers convened in the council of war, which was held a short time previously to the battle. The idea that General Washington should have any suspicions of his "movements" is therefore improbable, if not absurd. What mischief could he do, if so inclined, without any command? Besides, in a letter which Washington wrote to him four months afterwards, he subscribes himself "with sincere esteem and affection," a mode of expression which Washington certainly never used towards any man whom he had suspected of treasonable designs against his country. And it may be added, that similar expressions frequently occur in his subsequent correspondence.

I can, moreover, say with perfect sincerity and truth, that in my examination of documents and papers relating to the Revolution, I have seen nothing that could give countenance to so grave a charge against General Reed. There is surely nothing to this effect in Washington's papers, or in those of other general officers which have come under my inspection. He had a slight difference with the Commander-in-Chief in

1776, but this was of short duration, and it was after this event that Washington offered him the command of the Cavalry; and he often consulted him on military affairs, particularly in regard to the State of Pennsylvania. He was appointed a Brigadier-General by Congress, and was chosen a member of that body from his native State. During a large part of the winter at Valley Forge he was present in camp, as one of a Committee from Congress for reorganizing the army; and he afterwards held the office of President of Pennsylvania, and continued in the public service till near the end of the war. Are we now to form so low an opinion of the sagacity and wisdom of the leaders of that day, as to believe that they would sustain in such responsible stations a man whose patriotism they suspected, and, least of all, a man whom they looked upon as an enemy in disguise? The thing is so incredible in itself, that it requires the strongest positive proof to clothe it with even a shadow of probability; for we cannot fix so dark a stain upon the memory of General Reed, without seriously implicating the character of the eminent patriots who gave him their support and confidence.

In the public offices in London I have examined all the correspondence between the British officers in America, and the Ministers, during the war. I have no remembrance of seeing General Reed's name mentioned in these papers on any occasion.

I am, with great respect,

Your most obt'ser't,

JARED SPARKS.

W. B. REED, Esq.

#### 6. MR. SPARKS TO MR. REED.

Oct. 10, '42.

MY DEAR SIR: I have written the enclosed letter (No. 5) in such a manner that you can make such use of it as you think proper, except to print it, which I would not like to have done without my previous knowledge.

The letters are so strange that I should think them forgeries, if it were possible for any human being to practise such an imposition. In the light of testimony they really amount to nothing. Kemp's letters, in particular, may be confuted in detail in all points of fact. Do you observe that his discharge is dated five days *before* the battle of Monmouth, so that he must have fought that battle with one leg. Smith's letters are strange, but they contain nothing but rumor and hearsay, uttered in an ill-natured spirit. From the style, I should think them spurious. It is not the style of an old man. The anecdotes and gossip cannot, of course, be confuted, but the *facts* are no better than Kemp's. On reading them again I am more and more suspicious. Washington



could never have told him such tales; and I cannot believe that Smith would forge them. I have no fear that you will put all these charges to flight, if you think the matter worth the trouble. Who was the "Colonel" to whom Smith wrote?

Truly yours,

JARED SPARKS.

W. B. REED, Esq.

#### 7. MR. SPARKS TO MR. REED.

CAMBRIDGE, Oct. 11th, 1842.

MY DEAR SIR: Since writing to you yesterday, my mind has been upon those letters. If the case were mine, I think I should challenge them all as forgeries, and call on the editor of the paper to produce the originals in some public place where they may be inspected. This need not be done in your own name, but by some of your friends. If they should prove to be genuine, no harm will be done. Your defence may be just as strong, in regard to the facts, and you will know precisely on what ground you stand. It is next to impossible that Smith should have written such letters. That such a letter as Kemp's should be written at Valley Forge is in the highest degree improbable; and the story of the horse at Monmouth is ridiculous; and the idea that a *sergeant* should be sent after saddle and bridle equally so; and not less so, that this lame man, with such a leg as he speaks of, should be in the battle at all. All the letters look to me of a piece, and suspicious. Excuse this supplement, and believe me sincerely yours,

JARED SPARKS.

W. B. REED, Esq.

P. S. It is improbable that *Washington* should give such a discharge to an officer so low in rank. I do not remember any such. It might be proper enough, perhaps, for his Colonel to do it; but I doubt if it was ever done by the Commander-in-Chief, except possibly in some very extraordinary instance of bravery and good conduct, to which this Sergeant does not pretend; nor is anything of this kind mentioned in the two certificates. Moreover, Washington's certificate is dated more than two months before the Colonel's; and of what use could the latter be, after so full a one from the Commander-in-Chief? I should call for the originals, if I were resolved to pursue the matter at all.

#### IV. THE FORGERIES IN 1856.

##### 1. MR. REED TO MR. SMITH.

PHILADELPHIA, July 10, 1856.

MY DEAR SIR:—You will, I am sure, be surprised to hear, that it has suited the busy malignity of some persons here, to revive and

republish the Valley Forge Forgeries of 1842. You, I am confident, remember them well. After fourteen years, these wretched fabrications are dug up, and offensively circulated; and they are, I presume, bought and read exactly as if they were genuine. Time has diminished the witnesses of the detection of this crime. Mr. Gilmor, Mr. Purviance (I believe), and my brother, Mr. Henry Reed, are dead. You, Mr. McLane, and myself, are living.

It may become necessary for me to recall public attention to the fact, that, at the time of the publication, these documents, and especially the letters attributed to your father, were pronounced and proved to be forgeries; and I shall be much obliged to you, if you will say to me—and I assure you, I feel great repugnance to make the request—whether anything has occurred since, to change your opinion as to the infamous character of these papers. Your early answer will very much oblige me.

Your friend and servant,

WILLIAM B. REED.

## 2. MR. SMITH TO MR. REED.

BALTIMORE, 16th July, 1856.

DEAR SIR:—In reply to your letter, of the 10th instant, I have only to say, that nothing has occurred to make any change in my declaration, in regard to the letters ascribed to my late father, Gen. S. Smith, published by "Valley Forge," some fourteen years since.

My absence from town is the cause of your not having an earlier answer.

Your obedient servant,

J. SPEAR SMITH.

W. B. REED, Esq.

Philadelphia.

## 3. MR. REED TO MR. SPARKS.

PHILADELPHIA, July 9, 1856.

MY DEAR SIR:—Have you forgotten—and if you have, I am sorry to bring them to your recollection—some curious forgeries, which appeared in a Philadelphia paper as far back as 1842, under the signature of "Valley Forge?" They were proved, at the time, to be forgeries. Strange as it may seem, they have recently been revived, and republished, and circulated here. It becomes necessary for me to print the proof of their infamous character. At the time, you wrote to me three very kind letters, and I shall be glad to have your permission, without comment, to print them. You may have forgotten, and I now

enclose them. Be so good as to return them to me at once, and say whether you object to their being printed. If you have the least objection, pray say so, frankly.

Truly, yours,

WILLIAM B. REED.

To MR. SPARKS,

Cambridge.

#### 4. MR. SPARKS TO MR. REED.

GLENN HOUSE, N. H., July 11, 1856.

DEAR SIR:—Your letter, of the 9th instant, has just come to hand, enclosing three letters, which I wrote to you in 1842. You request permission to print those letters. As they expressed my deliberate opinion at the time, after a thorough examination of the subject, I see no objection to their being printed.

It is very extraordinary, that those spurious letters should again be brought before the public. I hope you will send me a copy of whatever you may print in regard to them.

Truly, yours,

JARED SPARKS.

WM. B. REED, Esq.

#### 5. MR. REED TO MR. W. D. LEWIS.

No. 241 WALNUT STREET,

July 15, 1856.

DEAR SIR:—Are you aware, that there has lately been a reprint, in this city, of the Valley Forge Forgeries of 1842? They have been republished by a young man, whom I do not know by sight, and, as he says (so I am told), extensively circulated. On looking over my papers of that date, I find that it was through you that, on the detection of the forgeries, Whitney sent me the manuscripts which I now have. My recollection is, that, at the time, you told me, Whitney expressed a strong feeling as to the imposture that had been practised on him, and was willing to do anything to aid in discovering the forgers. Have you any objections to state to me your recollections on this subject?

Truly, yours,

WILLIAM B. REED.

To MR. LEWIS

#### 6. MR. LEWIS TO MR. REED.

No. 500 SPRUCE STREET,

July 16, 1856.

DEAR SIR:—I am in receipt of your note of yesterday, in which you

ask my recollection on the subject of the surrender by Mr. R. M. Whitney, in 1842, of certain forged letters purporting to have been written by General Samuel Smith and General Wayne, implicating the character of your grandfather. I remember well the publication of the letters in question, in a daily newspaper of which Mr. Whitney was then editor, and the pains you took to prove them forgeries. I also remember, that Mr. Whitney, to whom they had been sent anonymously, expressed a full belief in their genuineness, and that his unknown correspondent would appear and vindicate them as such at the test to which you had invited him. I remember, too, that he failed to appear, although his presence in or near our city at the time was proven by the frivolous pretexts under which he attempted to excuse his non-appearance.

This failure was deeply mortifying to Mr. Whitney, and, with other circumstances, satisfied him that he had been imposed upon. He expressed much indignation on the occasion, and, as a proof of his sincerity, at my request gave to me the forgeries for the purpose of their being surrendered to you, that you might have the means always at hand of comparing the writing with that of suspected persons, and the chances be thus increased of detecting the forger, which Mr. Whitney was as anxious should be done as yourself.

I delivered the letters to you in the autumn of 1842, and have always since supposed, that their forgery was a fact universally admitted.

Yours, very truly,

WM. D. LEWIS.

WM. B. REED, Esq.

The above documents being original letters, received by Mr. Reed, or draughts of letters written by him, are this day put into our hands, and by us deposited in the archives of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

JOHN JORDAN,  
TOWNSEND WARD.

July 22, 1856.

Most of the foregoing documents have, as their dates show, been in my possession for many years. They are now printed for the first time. I have hesitated as to whether I am right in printing them at all, and am only induced to do so, by the hope that it will put an end forever to the persevering use of these spurious documents, which have more than once been revived for the purpose of mischief.

WILLIAM B. REED.

PHILADELPHIA, July, 1856.













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